



Executive summary

Mid-term Portfolio Review

Programme 2019-2024

Rwanda

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

This Mid Term Review (MTR) aims at appreciating the value of the results as well as the implementation process and related development cooperation strategy of the bilateral portfolio of the Belgian Development Agency, Enabel, in Rwanda over the period 2019-2024. It seeks, at the specific intervention level, to support the steering of the action, to contribute to learning from experience and to ensure accountability of the action.

The portfolio covers 4 main sectors: agriculture, health, urbanisation and Public Finance Management (PFM). At portfolio level, it aims to support strategic steering and contribute to learning based on an in-depth analysis of the added value of the portfolio approach. It proposes options for improvement and lessons for the development of future portfolios.

At the methodological level, the review develops three levels of analysis using a pyramid approach. On the basis of the interventions, it develops an analysis by pillar which in turn contributes to the analysis of the whole portfolio. The performance of Enabel's work as well as the answers to specific questions and the conclusions, recommendations and lessons of the review are analysed at the level of each pillar as well as at the level of the overall portfolio.

The review focuses primarily on the analysis points and evaluation questions specified by pillar and at the level of the overall portfolio in the Terms of Reference (ToR, annex 1). The analysis of the criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as well as of the transversal and horizontal criteria (gender, private sector development and accountability) is carried out non-mechanically. As the objective of the portfolio approach is to build overall coherence at programme level and to encourage synergies between the different pillars and interventions, attention is paid to complementarities, coordination, mutualisation, governance and capitalisation.

The review is carried out by 3 European-Rwandan pairs (each responsible for the Agriculture, Health and Urbanisation sectors) and a senior Rwandan expert (for PFM). It is divided into 3 main phases: i) preparation; ii) data collection (9-14 days of interviews/field visits in Rwanda depending on the pillar); iii) analysis, restitution and report drafting.

The data collection phase included mainly bilateral interviews and focus groups. It was complemented by bibliographic work that began at the start-up phase and continued throughout the review until the report was written. It ended with five debriefing sessions, one for each pillar and one for the portfolio level.

The limitations of the review are that relatively few projects are analysed in detail, which limits the analysis of complementarities, especially as there are few of these in the first place. In addition, the portfolio review exercise is new for Enabel and the expectations of the different Enabel actors (HQ, country office, project teams) do not yet seem to be well harmonised.

2 Results and conclusions

2.1 Performance criteria

The relevance of the interventions is very satisfactory. The programmes correspond to Rwanda's priorities and policies as well as to its strategic options. Furthermore, the portfolio is aligned with Belgium's current thematic priorities. In addition, the participative process of formulation and implementation, in close collaboration with the national authorities and

agencies in charge of the actual implementation has also ensured the continued relevance of the portfolio to Rwandan national as well as more local priorities.

The overall approach of the various interventions and related sectors is coherent. The actions fit well into the legislative and regulatory context. The reconstructed ToC are logical. The interactions with other actors working on similar issues are satisfactory and no duplication of efforts is observed. At the portfolio level, however, there are few links between sectors and more synergies could have been sought between sectoral interventions. Moreover, there is no marked "one roof" or "Team Belgium" dimension. However, this situation raises the question of how far coherence should be sought at the level of a development partner's portfolio. Indeed, it appears preferable and more in accordance with alignment principles to seek coherence beyond Enabel's own portfolio taking a global view of national development efforts and how Enabel helps ensure national strategies are implemented satisfactorily.

Effectiveness (and impact) is satisfactory, although at the halfway point this assessment needs to be confirmed. Significant progress has already been made in all sectors, with tangible results already emerging. Infrastructure and equipment have been provided, and are still being so, in the agriculture, health and urbanisation sectors. Significant amounts of capacity building have been undertaken in all sectors and private actors are emerging in the agriculture and urbanisation sectors supported by Business Development services such as input provision, microfinance and advisory services. Basket funds have contributed to strengthening the global institutional framework in the agriculture and health sectors. More generally, they support policy dialogue as well as dialogue between DPs. Overall, it is expected that all outputs will be delivered before the end of the projects.

Efficiency is also satisfactory. Enabel is considered a pragmatic and flexible institution with good adaptation capacity and a good capacity to interact and dialogue with stakeholders at all levels whether in the field or regarding policy work. Working through local partners, with the possible exception of NIRDA, is proving efficient although grants can be quite burdensome to manage, particularly when partners, despite initial organisational assessments, display low implementation capacity. Nonetheless, TA costs are lower than expected. Activities are advancing and the level of financial execution is satisfactory. By the end of the programme, mid 2024, the majority of activities are expected to be implemented. Basket funds complement more classic projects effectively and are also considered to be implemented efficiently. Although the Covid crisis initially delayed some activities and some interventions were initially slow in putting their teams together, such delays have now mostly been overcome, despite the sentiment that procurement has been quite cumbersome.

Sustainability requires more attention despite the good level of participation and ownership obtained, and further consolidated through working with local partners and Rwandan institutions. Indeed, although capacity building has been significant, human resources appear to still need considerable strengthening. Moreover, quite a high staff turnover at district level and insufficient staffing in some sectors limits sustainability. More generally, issues related to organisation and maintenance should be addressed more thoroughly, as well as institutional strengthening, financial sustainability in particular. In terms of Private Sector Development, profitability of activities should be analysed more in depth, particularly that of building material value chains and, in the agriculture sector, the profitability of the pig and poultry value chains according to the size of production units. It is necessary to develop business plans and business linkages and, in relation to pig and poultry breeding, possibly proposed more varied set of farming system adapted to the varying access to production factors according to types of producers. In the agricultural sector, biosecurity issues need more attention. All sectors, with the possible exception of PFM, consider that they should receive support beyond the timespan of the current programme.

In terms of cross-cutting aspects, gender issues are not dealt with satisfactorily. They are mainly approached through quotas of beneficiaries and no formalised transformative approach based on more structural factors linked to the perception of men and women's role in Rwandan society is developed. On the other hand, private sector development is given substantial attention through a dedicated TA; besides it is one of the only aspects which tangibly cuts across two sectors: agriculture and urbanisation. Finally, accountability is also addressed satisfactorily: beyond support to PFM, national systems have been used and a public finance advisor contracted, enabling a degree of national system strengthening and favouring greater transparency. Nonetheless, monitoring and evaluation (and reporting) could still be reinforced.

2.2 Specific questions related to the portfolio level

The portfolio is still relevant to the context as no major contextual changes have arisen and the covid crisis has now subsided. The few adaptations which could be made concern the need to address sustainability concerns more thoroughly, particularly in relation to socio-organisational aspects of infrastructure and equipment operation and maintenance and institutional strengthening. A more formalised gender strategy could also be developed though this should go beyond the current portfolio to have significant impact.

There is limited need for portfolio level animation and governance as the 4 sectors tend to work in parallel; all the more so as there is no portfolio level objective or ToC. There are few potential complementarities within the portfolio to exploit. Portfolio decision-making mechanisms are working but have been affected by Covid with only one Annual Joint Consultative Committee being held properly and most project steering committees held at a distance until this year. Annual portfolio reports focus on individual project progress with scarce added value beyond project outputs and outcomes. It is hard to identify any additional results resulting from the portfolio approach.

Policy dialogue is undertaken at sectoral level. The portfolio approach is too limited to reinforce Enabel's position at a more holistic level in terms of knowledge management and policy dialogue. However, Enabel's involvement in Sectoral Working Groups and the Donor Coordination Group is satisfactory.

The mutualisation of administrative and financial resources at the level of the representation is considered a success. It enables a rational and efficient use of resources. Besides, it has contributed to harmonise administrative and financial procedures between interventions and, thanks to a more transversal approach, helped administrative and financial personnel support each other. The mutualisation helps maintain a global vision over the portfolio which facilitates administrative and financial control of the programme; this enables to avoid temporary "work jams" due to the synchronisation of project cycles that results from the portfolio approach.

The possibility offered by the portfolio to transfer budgets between interventions has not needed to be put into practice. Although one budgetary uncertainty subsists in the agricultural sector, despite administrative procedures having been simplified, fund transfers between sectors would be unpopular and difficult to implement. Currently, any transfer of funds between sectors could only be justified by the need to consolidate results in a sector due to its support not being taken over to the next portfolio. In this respect, there is currently a need for a clearer vision of the outline of the next portfolio.

Planned resources in terms of budget and staff are sufficient. More than resources, time is missing to consolidate results. Indeed, all sector reviews suggest that sectors should be taken

over to the next portfolio. This pleads for longer and more flexible portfolio implementation periods to adapt to varying sectoral contexts and dynamics and support result consolidation.

COVID-19 initially affected target sectors of activity particularly as it halted exchanges within value chains and prevented movements for most partners and beneficiaries as well as project teams. The crisis therefore strongly slowed down activities preventing or forcing to reschedule training sessions and participatory work. The project adapted its work in consequence and took a certain number of measures to support the value chains it was working is (through the purchase of eggs for child care centers for instance). None the less, the crisis has now sufficiently subsided as to be largely behind; and most delays have been filled. At the present stage, no further adaptation measures appear necessary.

3 Recommendations

On the basis of the previous analysis and of the main conclusions, the following recommendations are made at a portfolio level:

Recommendations	Actors targeted	Operational / strategic
<u>R1: Pay greater attention to ensuring the sustainability of the interventions</u> This implies putting a greater focus on capacity building, institutional strengthening or infrastructure and equipment management and maintenance rules and regulations, amongst others.	Project teams (and Enabel HQ and DGD in relation to the future portfolio).	Operational
<u>R2: Seek portfolio coherence beyond the portfolio itself at the level of national Rwandan development efforts and sectoral policies:</u> In line with the Paris Agreement, the coherence of a Development Partner's action should be conceived within the more global framework of a country's action and policies. In this sense, Enabel's portfolio approach should put less emphasis on synergies and complementarities internal to Enabel's action and prioritise those developed with national efforts as well as those of other development partners.	Enabel representation in Rwanda, Enabel HQ and DGD	Strategic
<u>R3: Devise ways of preparing partner grant agreements earlier in the project cycle:</u> This could involve transferring more decisional power from Enabel HQ to its national representations for them to manage the process more freely; or HQ staff travelling to partner countries at the beginning of the portfolio cycle with the aim of negotiating grant agreements within the first few weeks of this cycle (a set of distance calls could also be foreseen). A further modality, could be to integrate as far as possible the grant negotiation process within the portfolio formulation process.	Enabel HQ	Operational
<u>R4: Introduce more flexibility in relation to project closure dates</u> (as rhythms of progress may vary and at the end of a portfolio period needs in terms of consolidating activities and closing an intervention in a healthy and sustainable manner may be very varied.	DGD	Strategic
<u>R5: Develop a more structured knowledge management and dissemination system</u>	Project teams, Enabel representation and Ambassade	Strategic
<u>R6: Better anticipate the recruitment of key staff to allow the timely start of interventions</u> (to allow the 5 years implementation period to be fully capitalised upon).	Enabel representation, Enabel HQ and DGD	Strategic
<u>R7: Extend portfolio implementation periods by a year returning to past Enabel practices;</u> so as to enable aspects linked to capacity building, institutional strengthening, establishing rules and procedures for infrastructure and equipment management and maintenance to be consolidated, thus improving project sustainability.	DGD and Federal Public Service (FPS) for external affairs (as well as Enabel HQ)	Strategic
<u>R8: Formalise the implementation of cross-cutting approaches (gender, PSD...) through the definition of country specific contextualised ToC</u> (enabling to focus more on the structural factors which underly cross-cutting issues).	Enabel HQ and Enabel Representation	Strategic

More specific recommendations are made at the level of each sector.

4 Lessons learned

The analysis of the implementation of Enabel's 2019-2024 portfolio in Rwanda enables to identify the following lessons:

At portfolio level:

- Direct management ("Régie") by Enabel is efficient but needs to be undertaken in a spirit of joint management;
- Implementation through direct funding of local institutions is effective and efficient
- Basket funds are an efficient influence leveraging strategy;
- Time is needed to consolidate socio-organisational aspects of an intervention.

In the health sector:

- H1. The program approach, with inclusiveness of GOR and other national stakeholders, versus a donor driven approach, strengthens strong ownership, accountability, and sustainability;
- H2. If monitoring by modality takes precedence over monitoring by result, there is a risk of losing the globality of the project objectives;
- H3. Addressing national challenges in the RMNCAH response requires a reinforced evidence-based approach addressing root causes and joint planning across the continuum of care and between sectors to address socio economic determinants;
- H4. Urban and rural settings demonstrate variable results in terms of utilisation of services by adolescents and GBV victims. A contextualised service delivery approach is therefore needed;
- H5. Decreasing teenage pregnancies promoting ARSH services is a complex issue requiring proximity and acceptability of services, through a multisectoral approach, and a focus on most vulnerable groups;
- H6. District Hospital leadership is essential for effective quality improvement interventions and requires institutionalisation of QI strategies;
- H7. Effective health services require overcoming socio-cultural barriers by collaborating closely with local leaders and other gate keepers.

In the Agriculture sector:

- A1. An understanding of cost-benefit and economies of scale is needed to target beneficiaries adequately. As the pig and poultry value chains generate relatively small margins compared to the capital investment, they require meaning a relatively small decrease in productivity or unexpected cost can have significant effects on the business's profitability;
- A2. In semi-industrial pig and poultry farming, risk management is key to sustainability. In particular, it is crucial i) to observe rigorous biosecurity measures; and ii) to ensure that one has a secure market so as not to incur losses or end up feeding one's animals unnecessarily.

In the Urban Development sector:

- U1. Bottom-up, learning-by-doing and aerial approach support local ownership and have strong scaling up potential;
- U2. For greater impact, development of building material value chains should be coupled with the use of such material in construction projects;
- U3. Environmental and social impact of construction activities needs to be better taken into account;
- U4. Theoretical training should always proceed in parallel with practical capacity building.

In the PFM sector:

- PFM1. Basket funding mechanisms require a cohesive and committed leadership;
- PFM2. Basket funding mechanisms require constant dialogue and communication;
- PFM3. Basket funding mechanisms require stakeholder coordination.